

ARIZONA STATE VETERINARY MEDICAL EXAMINING BOARD

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JUL 26 2021

BY: *GR*

COMPLAINT INVESTIGATION FORM

If there is an issue with more than one veterinarian please file a separate Complaint Investigation Form for each veterinarian

PLEASE PRINT OR TYPE

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY:

Date Received: JULY 26, 2021 Case Number: 22-06

A. THIS COMPLAINT IS FILED AGAINST THE FOLLOWING:

Name of Veterinarian/CVT: MICHAEL WALKER & MONICA RUNGE

Premise Name: BRADSHAW MOUNTAIN ANIMAL HOSPITAL

Premise Address: 6227 E. 2ND ST.

City: PRESCOTT VALLEY State: ARIZ. Zip Code: 86314

Telephone: 928-772-7775

B. INFORMATION REGARDING THE INDIVIDUAL FILING COMPLAINT*:

Name: MICHAEL & TANYA DAUER

Address: [REDACTED]

City: [REDACTED] State: [REDACTED] Zip Code: [REDACTED]

Home Telephone: [REDACTED] Cell Telephone: [REDACTED]

*STATE LAW REQUIRES WE HAVE TO DISCLOSE YOUR NAME UNLESS WE CAN SHOW THAT DISCLOSURE WILL RESULT IN SUBSTANTIAL HARM TO YOU, SOMEONE ELSE OR THE PUBLIC PER A.R.S. § 41-1010. IF YOU HAVE REASON TO BELIEVE THAT SUBSTANTIAL HARM WILL RESULT IN DISCLOSURE OF YOUR NAME PLEASE PROVIDE COPIES OF RESTRAINING ORDERS OR OTHER DOCUMENTATION.

C. PATIENT INFORMATION (1):

Name: TRIXIE
Breed/Species: TERRIER MIX
Age: 11 YRS + Sex: F Color: TAN

PATIENT INFORMATION (2):

Name: _____
Breed/Species: _____
Age: _____ Sex: _____ Color: _____

D. VETERINARIANS WHO HAVE PROVIDED CARE TO THIS PET FOR THIS ISSUE:

Please provide the name, address and phone number for each veterinarian.

MONICA RUNGE DVM
BRADSHAW MOUNTAIN ANIMAL HOSPITAL
SAME INFO AS ITEM A
INITIAL EXAM ON 5/24/21

E. WITNESS INFORMATION:

Please provide the name, address and phone number of each witness that has direct knowledge regarding this case.

UNKNOWN.

Attestation of Person Requesting Investigation

By signing this form, I declare that the information contained herein is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge. Further, I authorize the release of any and all medical records or information necessary to complete the investigation of this case.

Signature: Michael Bauer - Janya D. Bauer

Date: July 21, 2021

F. **ALLEGATIONS and/or CONCERNS:** - *See attachment (F1)*
Please provide all information that you feel is relevant to the complaint. This portion must be either typewritten or clearly printed in ink.

Attachment F(1) - Allegations and concerns.

When we took Trixie into Bradshaw V.H., on 5/24/2021, she was examined by a Dr. Monica Runge.

We initially were concerned about her breath as it had become somewhat unpleasant and we didn't understand why as we had taken her to our veterinarian in Escondido, California about 20 months prior and had 7 teeth removed. She examined Trixie and gave us a dental estimate of between \$450 and \$770.00.

While my husband was there, he asked Dr. Runge to take a look at a growth that had formed on her left chest. She did and suggested that we have it removed when the teeth were extracted so as to require just one surgical procedure. She gave us a surgical estimate of between \$693 and \$1,419.75. These costs are reflected on the paperwork dated 5/14/2021.

Admittedly, we were a little stunned by these costs as we have had rescue dogs for 45 years and have never had these types of costs. However, costs have never been a part of our decision making when it comes to our pet's health. So, we decided to have both procedures done simultaneously so as not to have our pet anesthetized twice.

The earliest open date they had to perform this work was July 6, 2021.

On 7/6/2021, Michael dropped Trixie off at 7:45 and was asked to complete some basic paperwork. Included in this paperwork as a diagram of a dog lying on her back. Michael was asked to indicate the location of the growth that was scheduled to be removed. To his recollection, he indicated the left chest area with an X.

Michael picked her up at 3:30 on the afternoon and brought her home. We were very pleased with the bill as it indicated that she did NOT require ANY dental surgery. We were delighted to hear this as we thought the original diagnosis was in error and although we are not veterinary techs or doctors, we were glad that Dr.(?) Runge had been very wrong in her assumption that Dr. Walker would want to do the extractions. He did however, provide a dental cleaning which we thought was a bit premature, but nonetheless, we were happy it wouldn't have to be done again for quite awhile.

Upon further examination of Trixie, he discovered that the growth that we wanted to have excised, was still there! We were shocked. Needless to say, Michael immediately returned to the Vet Clinic and asked the receptionist to get Dr. Walker as we needed to speak with him immediately. Unfortunately, at 4:45,(??) we were told he was "in surgery" and couldn't speak to Michael then, but would call us when he was finished with the surgery.

We asked her if she had an explanation for this unfortunate turn of events. She was understandably flustered and went to the rear of the office to speak with Dr. Walker and when she returned, mumbled something about him finding a small lump on Trixie's leg and removed it. The growth we wanted removed was the size of a large grape, and we had never seen a small growth on her leg so can't say what it looked like. She said doctor felt that the other growth should be removed in a separate surgery and that they would send us an estimate of the costs for that surgery. I couldn't believe my ears!! Is this his way of increasing business?? - by defrauding pet owners???

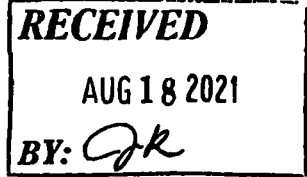
Needless to say, we never heard from him that evening or any evening thereafter.

I (Tanya, the wife) can't remember if I called to file a complaint on the following Thursday or Friday, but the office was closed until the following Monday, July 12th, with the message that my call would be returned the following Monday. Indeed, Tracy Riendeau called me on Monday and we spoke for about 20 minutes. She said she would mail me the complaint forms and I received them the following Wednesday.

Strangely enough, later that same day, I received a call from the Bradshaw office from a very pleasant woman who was calling to see how Trixie was doing after her surgery. She obviously knew nothing about the issues regarding Trixie's surgery and was frankly, quite distressed by the story I related to her. She was totally puzzled by doctor's neglect of the situation and assured us that when he returned to the office after the weekend, that he would definitely contact us that Monday, the 12th of July. Unfortunately, although she did introduce herself, I was amiss in not remembering her name.

So, now he was supposed to call us on the evening of the 6th, and the evening of the 13th. It is now the 21st of July and still no call. We did take Trixie in on the 19th to get her stitches removed. There was no comment from the receptionist except that she was a very good girl. We also asked for a copy of the blood analysis which was provided for us.

I, of course, will never return to that office as I feel there is absolutely no communication between the doctors and the employees. I'm sure this is not the only oversight and unnecessary surgery that has been performed by Bradshaw and wish to put an end to our association with Dr. Walker and his assistants. However, I do think we need some satisfaction from our association with his clinic. We do not wish any monetary compensation, but certainly feel that we need to have earned the right to have him provide us with a qualified veterinarian at his cost.



Dear Tracy A. Riendeau and Whom It May Concern,

Here is my narrative of the situation:

I had an appointment for "Trixie" scheduled on 5-24-2021 and all the appointment said was it was for a Dental Exam. I performed a full physical exam that included the requested dental exam. I informed the owners (Mr. Michael Bauer and Mrs. Tanya Bauer) that "Trixie" does indeed have dental disease present (grade 2-3/4 dental disease). I then recommended that the owners schedule "Trixie" for a dental cleaning procedure. I informed the owners that the bad breath they were smelling from "Trixie" was due to the dental disease. Discussed dental disease progression with time and told the owners that "Trixie" may need to have some extractions. I informed the owners that we are unable to accurately determine exactly how many teeth, if any, need to be extracted prior to anesthesia. I told the owners that once the tartar is cracked off the teeth, then we perform an individual exam of each tooth and that any necessary extractions would be determined and performed while "Trixie" was under anesthesia. I informed the owners that the longer the dental disease is present, the more advanced the dental disease becomes, and the more likely that "Trixie" would need tooth extraction(s) performed.

I noted a heart murmur during the exam (grade III-IV/VI left sided murmur). I proceeded to discuss heart disease and heart murmurs in dogs with the owners. I recommended chest xrays as the next step for evaluating the heart disease, but owners declined having chest xrays performed on 5-24-21. I told the owners that having heart disease can increase "Trixie's" risk of complications during anesthesia, but that we take precautions to minimize this risk.

When the owners were in the exam room with "Trixie", the owners also requested that a mass on the front left limb be examined. During the physical exam of the patient, more than just the one mass was observed. Owners stated that the mass they were concerned with was on "Trixie's" front left leg. I discussed with the owners how any mass near, or on, a limb has the potential to limit mobility with time as the mass grows. I told the owners that the mass on the front limb is most concerning due to the location, as there is a very limited amount of skin and space on the leg itself, and the bigger the mass is at the time of surgery, the higher chances of complications during healing after surgery (i.e. stitches pulled out, seroma formation, dehiscence, etc). Owners expressed that they understood. I discussed the following options with the owners: 1) surgical removal and/or biopsy (aka histopathology) of any mass of concern, 2) Fine needle aspirate (FNA) of mass(es), 3) Owners to monitor at home for changes in size, shape, discomfort, or any other abnormalities. Owners declined FNA on 5-24-21, but the owners expressed interest in surgery to remove mass. I told the owners that if they chose to have the mass of concern removed, we can pair this with a dental cleaning procedure. Owners were interested, so I first provided them with a standard printout of our dental procedure estimate of costs (we keep a stack of printed dental procedure estimates in each room). I explained each part of the dental procedure estimate and informed them that they would be asked specific questions on the paperwork they filled out on the morning of the procedure. Owners also wanted an estimate for a dental procedure paired with mass removal. We have a template for "growth removal with dental" estimate, which includes 30 to 60 minutes of surgery time, optional (but recommended) histopathology, and optional (but recommended) dental procedure. I left the exam room at this time to print out the growth removal with a dental estimate (\$696.00 to \$1419.75). I then asked one of our veterinary assistants to take the estimate into the exam room and go over it with the owners, which is standard procedure at Bradshaw Mountain Animal Hospital. The procedure (dental procedure with mass removal) was scheduled by a staff member and was scheduled with Dr. Michael Walker on 7-6-21.

I was informed by Dr. Michael Walker in early August 2021 about the situation. Apparently there was some confusion from the time the owners left the appointment with me on 5-24-21 and the time they scheduled the appointment on 7-6-21 as to which leg mass was supposed to be removed. The mass the owners indicated was of concern during the initial exam by me (Dr. Monica Runge) was different from the mass the owners marked on the surgery intake form, day of the procedure. Dr. Michael Walker expressed regret that he didn't call the owners prior to surgery to offer to remove both the mass on the front left limb (mass of concern during appointment on 5-24-21) and the left axillary mass (marked as mass

the owners wanted to be removed on surgery intake paperwork 7-6-21). I express regret that I didn't do a full tumor map of every single mass during the initial 20 minutes dental exam appointment. The other option I should have offered was rescheduling the patient for a mass evaluation appointment so that I could address the masses individually, measure each mass, more strongly recommend a FNA of each individual mass, offer to send FNA samples into a clinical pathologist for evaluation, and have a more thorough discussion of the owners' expectations. I will keep these lessons learned going forward with my future patients.

Sincerely,

Monica Runge, DVM, CVA

Associate Veterinarian -

Bradshaw Mountain Animal Hospital

Work: (928) 772-7775

DOUGLAS A. DUCEY
- GOVERNOR -



VICTORIA WHITMORE
- EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR -

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INVESTIGATIVE COMMITTEE REPORT

TO: Arizona State Veterinary Medical Examining Board

FROM: AM Investigative Committee: Robert Kritsberg, DVM - Chair
Christina Tran, DVM
Carolyn Ratajack
Jarrod Butler, DVM
Steven Seiler

STAFF PRESENT: Tracy A. Riendeau, CVT
Marc Harris, Assistant Attorney General

RE: Case: 22-06

Complainant(s): Michael and Tanya Bauer

Respondent(s): Monica Runge, D.V.M. (License: 6898)

SUMMARY:

Complaint Received at Board Office: 7/26/21

Committee Discussion: 1/11/22

Board IIR: 2/16/22

APPLICABLE STATUTES AND RULES:

Laws as Amended August 2018

(Lime Green); Rules as Revised September 2013 (Yellow).

On May 24, 2021, "Trixie," an 11-year-old female Terrier mix was presented to Dr. Runge for an oral exam and have a mass evaluated. Complainants state they were concerned with a growth that was located on the left side of the dog's chest. When Dr. Runge examined the dog, Complainants expressed concerns with a mass on the left front leg; she recommended having the mass removed at the time of the dental procedure.

On July 6, 2021, the dog was presented to Dr. Walker to have the teeth cleaned with possible extractions and mass removal. Dr. Walker was not completely sure which mass Complainants wanted removed. He reviewed the medical records, the diagram the pet owner marked, spoke with staff, and examined the dog. Dr. Walker settled on the mass on the left front leg as the one that Complainants wanted removed. After the procedures that day, the dog was discharged.

After arriving home, Complainants realized the wrong mass was removed.

Complainant was noticed and did not appear.
Respondent was noticed and did not appear.

The Committee reviewed medical records, testimony, and other documentation as described below:

- Complainant(s) narrative: *Michael and Tanya Bauer*
- Respondent(s) narrative/medical record: *Monica Runge, DVM*

PROPOSED 'FINDINGS of FACT':

1. On May 24, 2021, the dog was presented to Dr. Runge to have an oral exam. According to Ms. Bauer, her husband also had Dr. Runge take a look at growth that had formed on the left side of the dog's chest. Upon exam, the dog had a weight = 12 pounds, a temperature = 101 degrees, a heart rate = 134bpm, and a respiration rate = 26rpm. Dr. Runge noted the dog had plaque and calculus covering most of the teeth and generalized gingival inflammation. She further auscultated a grade 3-4/6 left sided heart murmur.

2. Dr. Runge discussed heart disease and the dog's heart murmur with Complainants. She recommended thoracic radiographs as there can be an increased risk with anesthesia. Complainants declined work up of the heart murmur.

3. According to Dr. Runge, Complainants expressed concerns with the mass that was located on the left front limb, proximal dorsal antebrachium near elbow – SQ, mobile, soft/slightly firm, 1cm diameter. The dog had other SQ masses that have been present for years without much change. Dr. Runge recorded the mass on the left leg in the medical record as the mass Complainants were concerned about. She stated that she went over the importance for removing a mass on the leg and recommended the mass be removed at the time of the dental cleaning. Complainants approved and an estimate was provided for the procedures.

4. On July 6, 2021, Mr. Bauer brought the dog into the premises for the dental cleaning and mass removal. He was asked to complete paperwork and mark on a diagram where the mass was located that he wanted removed. Upon exam, the dog had a weight = 14 pounds, a temperature = 99.9 degrees, a heart rate = 130bpm, and a respiration rate = 14rpm. Dr. Walker auscultated the heart murmur, noted the dental disease, and found two masses – one on the dorsal medial left upper leg and one on the left cranial shoulder/chest – both soft and mobile.

5. Dr. Walker felt the mass on the shoulder/chest was a lipoma and the mass on the leg was of concern based on its location and character. He confirmed with staff that Complainants only wanted one mass removed but was not told which mass. Dr. Walker reviewed the consent form; the area marked for the mass to be removed was somewhat ambiguous. He also read Dr. Runge's notes about the mass to be removed. It was not completely clear, but based on his findings and the notes in the medical record, he proceeded with removing the mass on the brachial area.

6. Blood work was performed and determined the dog was a surgical candidate. An IV catheter was placed and LRS fluids were initiated. The dog was pre-medicated with atropine and butorphanol; induced with alfaxan; and maintained on sevoflurane and oxygen. The dog's teeth were cleaned, no extractions were needed, and the mass on the left leg was removed. It appeared to be a fatty tumor. The dog was administered post-op pain medication –

butorphanol and hydromorphone. The dog recovered uneventfully and the dog was discharged later that day with clindamycin. Mr. Bauer did not question the growth removal at discharge.

7. After arriving home, Complainants realized that the mass that was to be removed was still there. Mr. Bauer went back to the premises to speak with Dr. Walker. Dr. Walker was in surgery however advised staff that they could remove the mass at a discount. The dog had two masses close in proximity. Complainants wanted a call from Dr. Walker. It slipped Dr. Walker's mind and he did not call Complainants back that day.

8. On July 9, 2021, premises staff called Complainants to check on the dog after surgery. Ms. Bauer relayed that she was upset that the wrong mass was removed. Staff advised that they would have Dr. Walker return her call; the dog was reportedly doing well.

9. On July 19, 2021, the dog was presented to the premises for a suture removal. Complainants told staff that they had not heard from Dr. Walker about the wrong mass being removed. The sutures were removed and the dog was returned to the pet owners.

10. On July 21, 2021, Dr. Walker called Complainants to apologize for the wrong growth being removed. He admitted that he should have called to verify which mass since there were two growths present but he went off of the notes in the medical record. Dr. Walker offered to remove the growth in question; Complainants declined.

COMMITTEE DISCUSSION:

The Committee discussed that Respondent evaluated the dog, recommended a dental and mass removal. The mass of concern was clearly documented in her notes.

COMMITTEE'S PROPOSED CONCLUSIONS of LAW:

The Committee concluded that no violations of the Veterinary Practice Act occurred.

COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDED DISPOSITION:

Motion: It was moved and seconded the Board:

Dismiss this issue with no violation.

Vote: The motion was approved with a vote of 5 to 0.

The information contained in this report was obtained from the case file, which includes the complaint, the respondent's response, any consulting veterinarian or witness input, and any other sources used to gather information for the investigation.

TR

Tracy A. Riendeau, CVT
Investigative Division